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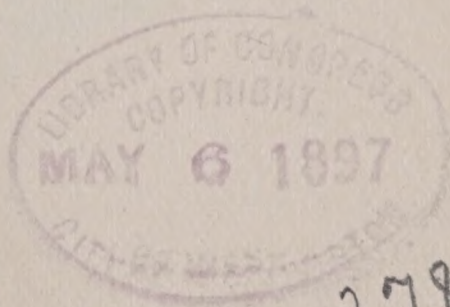
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THE BOYS IN THE BLOCK.

BY

MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN,

*Author of "The Vocation of Edward Conway,"
"The Flower of the Flock," etc.*



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THE BOYS IN THE BLOCK.

I.

FATHER RAYMOND was instructing his First-Communion class. He held it three times a week—on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday nights. Twenty boys of various sizes came tramping through the streets and pulled the bell-handle at the basement door.

It was about eight o'clock on the usual Wednesday night. The Bowery glittered with lights; the elevated trains thundered at intervals overhead; Ah Wung, who kept a laundry at the edge of the Chinese quarter, gazed serenely at the vases of hideous flowers that stood on a

shelf over his ironing-table. His eye caught Tom Keefe's as Tom peered through the window. Ah Wung shook his head, and muttered something unpleasant in his mysterious language against this 'Melican boy. The glance of the 'Melican boy had rudely brought him back from a dream of the Flowery Kingdom, where those hideous buds and blossoms in their dragon-covered vases were made. But Tom Keefe meant Ah Wung no harm. The last time he had been at confession, he had told the priest how often he had "chased the Chinees"—a form of amusement much in vogue in his part of the city—and he did not intend to do it again.

He was innocently wondering how Ah Wung managed to get his shirts so glossy; but Ah Wung did not know that. He suddenly rose out of his beautiful dream of Canton, or

some other Celestial city, where he hoped that his bones would be buried, and he began very grimly to fill his mouth with water, and to spurt it out on the clothes before him. He kept an eye on Tom, and Tom knew, from previous experience, that Ah Wung was ready to spurt a mouthful over him at the slightest provocation.

A clock struck eight. Tom looked around. Just then a shrill whistle sounded on the other side of the street.

“All right,” Tom said; and he whistled, too.

He was joined by another boy of about his own age, which was thirteen.

“Late, Ned?”

“No. Father Raymond does not begin work till ten minutes after eight.”

“What kept you?”

“Oh, you see, John didn’t get in

till after seven. It was a late day at his office and Larry was stuck with six *Telegrams* and seven *Mails and Expresses* until nearly seven, for the snow made people hurry along, so that they didn't stop to buy papers. And after supper was over I had to wash the dishes, for it was my night, you know. Come along !”

Ned looked at Ah Wung and gave a startling howl that made the poor washer-man start in terror.

“Don't,” said Tom. “Let the heathen alone. Father Raymond says they're fellow-creatures like us.”

“They may be,” answered Ned, “but I'm glad I'm not a fellow-creature like them. Good-by, cork soles.”

“Father Raymond said that we were not to plague them.”

“All right. I will not. But I forgot.”

Ned Smythe is a ruddy, freckled boy, with a snub nose, a sly twinkle

in his blue eyes, and big hands and feet, which seem very prominent, for he does not know what to do with them. His clothes are patched, but warm ; he wears a woollen scarf around his neck and tied over his ears.

Tom Keefe is paler and more thoughtful-looking. He is much thinner and taller than Ned, and he walks more slowly, as if he were tired. His clothes are more carefully kept and better fitting than his companion's. Looking at them, one could see at a glance that Tom had a mother and Ned had not.

Father Raymond sat at a desk in the church basement with nearly all his boys ranged before him. He was dignified, but benevolent-looking. Even his spectacles seemed to reflect things good-humoredly.

“Where's Larry to-night?” he asked, as Tom and Ned entered.

Larry was a year younger than his brother Ned.

“Please, Father, it’s his washing night,” said Ned.

Father Raymond looked at Ned with a slight air of surprise. Several boys giggled. Ned kicked the nearest one.

“Order!” said Father Raymond.

When everything was quiet he began the Our Father. Then he and the boys said the Hail Mary and the Gloria.

The lesson began.

Most of the boys had been to confession, but none of them had made his First Communion.

“‘What’s a sacrament?’” asked Father Raymond of a small boy at the end of the bench. He hung his head and stammered.

“Don’t be afraid, Charlie,” Father Raymond said kindly.

“There are seven——” began the small boy.

A dozen hands were put up.

“Next!”

“A ceremony——” began another boy eagerly.

“Next!”

Tom Keefe tried to collect his senses. It was near his turn. Oh, dear, if he had only paid particular attention to that answer.

“Next!—next!—next!”

Father Raymond’s “nexts” were like the snapping of a whip, sharp and quick.

“Well, Tom Keefe!”

“All the sacraments give grace——” mumbled Tom.

“Next!”

Father Raymond’s face expressed astonishment.

That always made them feel mean, they said.

Tom sat down, his ears tingling.

As he did so the answer came to him, and he put up his hand.

“Too late,” said Father Raymond.
“What is a sacrament?”

“Please, Father,” cried Ned Smythe, trembling, and almost ready to cry, “please say that over again?”

Father Raymond repeated the question as if he were reading to very small and stupid children.

The boys felt ashamed of themselves.

“Oh, I know!” cried Ned. “‘A sacrament is an outward sign, instituted by Christ, to give grace.’”

“It is nearly time somebody answered it,” commented Father Raymond.

The lesson went on with many disasters. The boys worked hard all day, and it was hard for them to get down to the study of even the easy chapters of the catechism. When some of the boys had called out

“Good-night, Father,” and had run out into the street, Father Raymond called Ned to his desk.

Ned went, expecting a reprimand. Father Raymond looked at him kindly.

“Why isn’t Larry here?” he asked again.

“It’s his turn to wash, Father.”

Father Raymond looked puzzled.

“John takes care of us, you know, Father,” explained Ned, “and he makes us take turns in doing the work. He does the washing one week, I take the second, and Larry the third. Larry has had to do it two weeks in succession because he did not come home one night until after ten o’clock. He went to the theatre. John keeps up discipline.”

“Do you mean to say that John and you and Larry keep house yourselves?”

“Yes,” answered Ned. “Of

course, Father, at the old stand, where father and mother used to live. Father was killed by a wall falling on him two years ago, and mother didn't live six months after that; so we have to look after ourselves."

Father Raymond smiled.

"Are you a good cook, Ned?"

"No," said Ned, very earnestly; "John's a good cook. You ought to taste his hash. It is splendid! Oh, my! I can wash, though."

"Yes, he can, Father," put in Tom Keefe, forgetting his manners, in his anxiety to support his friend. "His shirt bosoms are almost as shiny as Ah Wung's."

"I don't sprinkle 'em with my mouth, like a heathen, either," said Ned proudly.

Father Raymond smiled. He seldom laughed when the boys were present. If he laughed, they would

be sure to attempt "monkey tricks" to make him laugh again. He knew them well.

"Tell Larry to come to my room in the parochial house to-morrow night. How many boys are there in your block?"

"Thirteen," answered Ned promptly. "It's a very short block, you know. There are the Murphys, two of 'em, the three Malones, Tom and Bill Keefe, we three, and Alfred Schwatz, and his brothers, Michael and Henry. You mean the Catholic boys, don't you, Father?"

"Oh, yes."

"That's all, then. The Italians don't count."

"Yes, they do ; but Father Bianchi looks after them. Some of them are very nice boys."

Ned and Tom made no answer. They had made up their minds about the "eyetalians." There was a con-

stant warfare going on between the Americans in the block and the Italians. Father Raymond wanted to stop it.

“ Henry and Michael Schwatz and the Malone boys do not come to the First-Communion class. Do you know them ? ”

“ Oh, yes, ” said Tom ; “ they’re good fellows, but they like to go to the theatre on Saturday nights, and then they don’t feel like getting up in the morning. ”

Father Raymond shook his head gravely.

“ Could not you boys bring them to the class ? ”

“ Not much ! ” cried Ned ; then he reddened and stammered, “ I did not mean to talk that way, Father ; I forgot myself. ”

Father Raymond nodded.

“ Well, good-night, boys. Study your catechism lesson well for next

class-night, and don't be too hard on the Italians. Stop—here are two tickets for a concert to-morrow night.”

The boys took the tickets, and thanked the priest. He bent down to finish a letter. They looked at the tickets, and read the programme on the back of them.

“ A lot of hi-falutin' music we can't understand !” said Tom. “ If it was only Gilmore's, now ! I tell you, he had the boss band at Coney Island last summer.”

“ It's no use to have Father Raymond waste his tickets on us. We don't care for this classical stuff ;” and he spelled out “ Moonlight Sonata.” “ What does that mean ? I'd rather hear Harrigan sing ‘ A Pitcher of Beer.’ ”

Ned took the tickets back to Father Raymond, and said respectfully :

“ We hope you will give these tickets to some one proper, Father. The

music would be just wasted on us. We'd rather go to the theayter. We're much obliged. You don't happen to have any bill-poster tickets, do you? They'd be good enough for us."

Tom Keefe pulled Ned's jacket as hard as he could. He was shocked by such a bold request. Nevertheless, he waited anxiously until Father Raymond sealed his envelope, in the hope that the good priest might possibly produce some theatre tickets from the breast of his cassock, where he was supposed to keep a supply of pictures, medals, scapulars, pen-knives, and lead-pencils.

Father Raymond knew very well that Ned did not mean the faintest disrespect. What would have been disrespectful in boys of better breeding was simply the usual way of these children, who were without much direction at home.

“I wish you boys would go less to the theatre,” said Father Raymond. “Once in a while it does you no harm ; but as a regular thing it is bad.”

“But it brightens a fellow up when he’s been selling papers all day,” said Tom, “and things are rather dull at home. Oh, Father Raymond”—Tom was so sure of the kind priest’s sympathy, that he often made sudden confidences, which gave Father Raymond many clews in dealing with the boys—“you ought to see ‘The Cowboy’s Revenge!’ It *is* boss. There’s a fellow that got into trouble because he killed his own brother, and he goes to Texas, and resolves to blow himself up with dynamite, which he carries in a ring on his little finger, and he meets a cowboy, and the cowboy sees a scar on his third finger, and says, ‘Me-thinks I see one I have known,’ in a

thunderous tone, and then a damsel—she was a girl with red cheeks, but the people in the play call her a damsel—rushes out of a castle and says, ‘He-is-your-long-lost-brother-there-is-dynamite-in-his-ring,’ and then the cowboy grips the ring, and there is an awful explosion, and then——”

“Stop,” said Father Raymond, “that’s enough. What good does all that stuff do you?”

“It livens a fellow up,” said Ned, in a discouraged voice. He thought that Father Raymond might have waited till he told how the dynamite blew up a desperate villain, who was concealed in the castle, and how the long-lost brothers were happily united; but Father Raymond did not seem to care.

“Next week I’ll tell you the story of St. Sebastian,” said Father Raymond. “It’s true, and more thrilling than those cowboy lies.”

“Thank you, Father,” said the boys.

“And, Ned, give my best regards to John, and tell him I’d like to see him sometime. Keep out of mischief. God bless you both.”

II.

THE block was a short row of houses in a New York street, leading into the Bowery. The Bowery, it is said, has its name from the fact that it was, in old Knickerbocker days, a pleasant rural walk—a real “bower” of trees and shrubs. Looking at the row of glistening stores, hearing the clatter of the trains on the elevated railroad, it is hard to believe that the long, bustling thoroughfare was ever a country place.

The houses in the block were very tall. The lower part of each contained a store; the cellar, too, was used either as a store or as a dwelling for very poor people. All the people in the block were poor, but

some were poorer than others. These cellars were generally occupied by Chinese. The block contained a good many representations of various nationalities. Among them were several Italian families.

The boys in the block were divided into two cliques—one made up of the Italians and the other of the boys already mentioned. Their hands were against each other and both were against the Chinese.

So far, Father Raymond had in vain preached peace. There was no peace.

Giuseppe Baldini let a piece of watermelon fall on Ned Keefe's head. Ned punched Giuseppe when he had a chance.

Later, in the catechism class for the Italians, Giuseppe had been asked if he understood the meaning of forgiving his enemies.

“*Si si,*” he had answered at once.

“If somebody hit you,” asked the teacher, “would you forgive them?”

“*Si*—oh, yes,” answered Giuseppe, readily, thinking of Ned Keefe, “if I couldn’t catch him!”

Beppo Testa tied a tomato can to the tail of Ned Smythe’s dog, and Ned Smythe declared war against the three Testas, who played the harp, flute, and violin for a living.

Everybody in the block was soon more or less mixed up in the feud. It made the street in front of the block unsafe. The Italian boys, fewer in number than the others, had to get up early and run off about their business as quickly as they could. They prudently tried to get home before the others.

Every floor of the block contained, at least, three families. The war was not carried on inside the house. An occasional fight on the stairs occurred, but by common consent there

was a truce once the house was gained.

Tom and Ned went, with the best intentions, towards home after Father Raymond dismissed them. They felt virtuous. They were conscious of being truly good. They thought how much better they were than the other fellows who did not know their catechism lesson.

Boys in this rarely complacent state of mind had better be careful. A boy that feels his weakness is less likely to get into scrapes than he who thinks he is much better than his fellow-beings.

Tom and Ned walked on, sedately whistling a favorite tune in unison. As they neared the block, they saw Giuseppe Baldini and Beppo Testa crossing the street.

"Let's frighten them," Ned said.

"No," Tom answered; "Father Raymond would not like it."

“Just for fun, you know.”

Tom hesitated. Beppo carried his violin and Giuseppe had a bag strung across his back.

Beppo was a short boy, with large black eyes, white teeth, and black curly hair. Cold as it was, his ragged jacket was wide open in front. He had a pleasant expression, and he smiled whenever he had a chance.

Giuseppe was taller, not so dark, more quiet and thoughtful than Beppo.

Neither Giuseppe nor Beppo saw the two other boys.

“Come now,” whispered Ned, “we’ll frighten them.”

Tom, in spite of his good resolutions and self-complacency, did not resist this appeal. He and Ned darted behind a cart which stood in the street.

Beppo was softly singing “Santa Lucia.” Giuseppe looked around.

Who could tell whether the Murphys, the Malones, the Schwatzes, or other enemies might not be lying in wait? Giuseppe stopped. He thought he heard a sound.

“Whoop! give it to the Dagoes!” cried Ned, suddenly uttering the war-cry of his faction, and rushing from his retreat followed by Tom.

Giuseppe and Beppo stood still a minute, and then probably remembering that such attacks were never made by their enemies, except in large parties, turned and fled.

Ned and Tom ran after them, uttering unearthly yells. It seemed to the Italian boys as if half a dozen of their tormentors were on their track.

Giuseppe and Beppo made a dash towards the door of their dwelling; but Tom, who had now forgotten everything but the excitement of the chase, headed them off. Giuseppe jumped backwards, not noticing that

the entrance to the cellar had been left open, and fell headlong with a cry of fright, which, as he struck the ground with a thud, changed into a groan.

Beppo would have fallen, too, had not Tom caught him. As it was, he was knocked against the wall. He tried hard to save his violin by holding it in his arms. It was in vain. The force which pushed him crushed the instrument between him and the wall.

Beppo uttered a cry of despair, and carried the ruins of his violin to the light of the street-lamp. He wrung his hands.

“He couldn’t go on more if he’d killed a baby,” muttered Ned, feeling very much ashamed of himself. “It’s only an old fiddle.”

Beppo sobbed and gesticulated under the lamp-post.

“I am lost! I am lost!” he ex-

claimed in Italian. “It’s my father’s violin.”

“Don’t be a fool!” said Ned. “Don’t cry like a big baby. The thing can be mended, can’t it?”

“Never!” cried the Italian boy; “never—no!”

Ned saw that the violin was split clearly in two. The strings hung loose. It had parted, so that they clung to one piece, while the other was stringless. Ned’s heart sank. He had a good heart. Oh, why had he not followed Father Raymond’s advice!

Tom had gone down into the cellar in search of Giuseppe. He found him kneeling on the ground at the foot of the steps, trying to gather the apples which had been scattered from his bag as he fell.

Tom stooped down and tried to help him. It was dark and it was hard to find the apples. Tom lit a

match. He saw that Giuseppe had a cut on his head.

Giuseppe recognized him and went up the steps, clutching his bag.

“Wait a minute,” Tom said. “You’d better let me help you.”

“You’ve already helped me to a cut head,” answered Giuseppe, “and lost my apples. I don’t want any more help.”

When Giuseppe reached the street and saw the condition of Beppo’s violin, he became very angry.

“You are nice Christians,” he said. “You chase poor boys and try to hurt them. You are worse than the heretics. Poor Beppo can no longer play. He must starve, and Nina must starve. His brother, Filippo, is sick, and Ricardo is away in the country. What can be done now that Beppo has no violin?”

Ned and Tom felt very bad and uncomfortable. They were silent. If

Giuseppe had raved about his own misfortunes they would have answered him in their own way. But the sight of Giuseppe forgetting his injuries in those of another made them feel like brutes.

Beppo leaned against the wall of the house, bending over his crushed violin. He was the very picture of despair.

“You’d better go home,” said Ned gruffly, to hide his feeling.

Beppo made no answer.

“Perhaps he’s afraid to go home,” Tom suggested. “Let’s go with him and tell his people we did it.”

“Very well,” said Ned reluctantly, and then, turning to Giuseppe, “you can tell your folks that I cut your head, and that I lost your apples. If they want satisfaction, tell them they can take it out of me.”

“Will you give me back the apples?” demanded Giuseppe. “They

are very dear. I bought them to sell on a stand. I have lost a dozen, at least."

Ned made no reply to this practical proposition. He took Beppo's violin, and caught Beppo by the shoulder. Assisted by Tom, he half-dragged, half-carried the weeping boy up to a room on the fourth floor. He knocked at the door.

"Hush!" whispered a voice within.

The door opened. The boys saw an interior dimly lighted by a kerosene lamp. On a shelf against the wall was a colored statue of the Blessed Virgin, ornamented with some artificial flowers. There were three beds in the room, which was without carpet or other furniture, except a stool, a chair, and a table.

A little girl appeared in the doorway.

"Hush!" she whispered. "I have just made Filippo go to sleep."

She was an olive-skinned little girl, with large black eyes and a sweet expression. She wore a dress rather longer than American girls of her age—which was about thirteen—wear. Around her shoulders was drawn a gayly colored, three-cornered shawl.

She looked at Ned and Tom, and the smile on her face turned to a look of fear.

“Have you hurt Beppo?”

“Ah, no, Nina,” sobbed Beppo, “I wish they had! They have made me break our father’s violin.”

“Broken!” cried Nina, seizing the mutilated violin and kissing it. “And the dear father—may he rest in peace—loved it so!”

“What a fuss about an old fiddle!” muttered Ned.

Tom made no answer. Nina’s grief caused him to feel more like a brute than ever.

“No good ever comes of disobey-

ing Father Raymond," he said. "We've done a mean thing, Ned, and no mistake. It makes me sick to think of it."

"We'd better go," Ned said.

Nina looked at them reproachfully.

"What did Beppo do to you?"

"He made a face at me the other day," responded Ned promptly.

Nina's eyes flashed.

"And for that you broke our precious violin? How will Beppo earn money now? He cannot play Filippo's harp, and Ricardo is in the country. We can no longer buy medicine for Filippo. We must starve!"

Nina's gestures grew more impressive. She pointed to the statue of the Madonna. "How can you expect the Blessed Virgin to love you?"

Ned felt very uneasy.

"If Beppo had turned around and showed fight, like a man, he would not have broken his fiddle," he said.

“But you frightened us in the dark,” said Beppo, sobbing still. “There are so many of you in the block. We thought that you were a great crowd.”

Nina’s eyes flashed again.

“You Irish and American boys are cowards,” she said. “You attack our Italian boys because you think they will run.”

Ned clenched his fist.

“Oh, yes,” Nina said sarcastically, “hit me. I’m only a girl, but I will not run. I am surprised that Father Raymond does not teach you better.”

“He does,” said Tom.

“I’m sorry we did not mind him,” said Ned.

“Come in, Beppo,” Nina continued—“come; we will, at least, starve together. I hope *you* are satisfied with your work.”

“Good - night,” Ned answered feebly.

“Good-night, *gentlemen*,” responded Nina, shutting the door.

But the boys’ quick ears heard both Beppo and her sobbing over the violin.

“I never felt so mean in my life,” said Tom.

“They are making an awful fuss over that fiddle. We’ll have to help them some way.”

“I don’t see how we can, Ned, we have as much as we can do to help ourselves.”

“I wish I could blame it all on somebody else. I do, indeed! But I can’t. It was all our fault!”

“That little girl gave us some home thrusts. It’s a nasty business, Ned. We’ll have to stop plaguing the Italians. It never struck me before that we were doing them much harm. I wish we hadn’t acted like—like——”

“Cowards,” Ned said.

III.

THE washing was almost over when Ned Smythe, in a despondent frame of mind, reached home. John was trying hard to master a tough sum in fractions, for, although he was nearly twenty-one years of age, he had never had time to go to school for more than a few months in all his life. He was now a porter in a commission office, down-town; he was as industrious as he was ambitious, he wanted to be something more, and he knew that to rise, he must educate himself. So he worked with all his might when he had time. It was a slow task without a teacher. Besides, he had his share of the household work to do, which consisted of

the sewing and mending of the family. John could sew like a sailor. A tailor might have smiled at some of his seams, but they were strong. John had not served a year on the bark *Curlew*, bound from New York to Havana and back, for nothing. He could use his hands more skillfully than any landlubber.

John was big and stalwart. A healthy, honest fellow, with wide-open eyes that looked straight at the world.

Larry, who was washing his last pair of stockings, looked sleepy. He was a chubby boy, always with a tear in his clothes, no matter how diligently John might mend.

The room in which the boys cooked, talked, ate, and read, when they did read, had a neat square of bright carpet in the centre of the floor. It contained a big cooking stove, a table and several chairs. The walls were

papered with pictures cut from illustrated papers. Their sleeping-room was much smaller.

Their rooms were clean and warm—in contrast to those of many of their neighbors, where dirt and warmth seemed to be inseparable.

Ned opened the door and said :

“How d’ye do, boys !” and sank into a chair by the fire.

“I say,” Larry said, “did you get ‘The Bandit of the Pyrenees’ from Tom Keefe? He said he’d lend it to us.”

John raised his head from his book of arithmetic.

“Look here, Larry, I told you you should not read books like that. And, Ned, I hope you will not encourage him to break my rule.”

“Very well,” Ned said briefly.

“I guess you read them yourself when you were my age,” Larry burst out. “If you hadn’t read too many novels, you’d never have gone to sea.”

“That is true, Larry,” John answered, with that mixture of gentleness and firmness which had enabled him to control these hot-headed lads, “that is true. If I had minded wiser people, I would not have suffered as I did. I came home, after my last voyage in the *Curlew*, with a broken arm. For weeks I could get nothing to do, for nobody wanted to hire a boy who could use but one arm. I learned how foolish this reading of bad novels is.”

“They’re not bad,” snapped Larry, who had let his iron stay so long in one place, that there was a warning smell of burning stocking. “I never saw a bad word in any of them. The good people always get the money, and kill the bad people in the end.”

“You’d better stick to your catechism, I say,” answered John.

“I am not going to work all day

and have no fun at all. I am fond of reading, and I like good, stirring novels."

"You had better study something useful."

"I want fun for awhile."

"I don't," put in Ned. "John is right. Tom Keefe and I have been having fun, and I never felt so mean in my life."

John turned up the light and looked anxiously into Ned's face.

"No scrape I hope—and after catechism class, too."

"That's the worst of it. Father Raymond told me to meditate on the duty of loving my neighbors as myself, and he said, too, that Italians and everybody were our neighbors, and then I went out, and I'll tell you what I did."

It was an admirable trait in the Smythes that they were entirely frank. They had no secrets from

one another. They would tell unpleasant things and look for advice, sympathy, or even a scolding with complete indifference. John had taught them to be frank.

John shook his head gravely when Ned had finished.

“It’s too bad,” he said.

Ned moved uneasily in his chair.

“I didn’t think,” he said.

“But you and Tom have hurt both Beppo and Giuseppe, just the same as if you had thought.”

“I know that,” said Ned.

“I’ll drop in and see the Testas to-morrow night.”

“Don’t, John,” said Larry; “they will put a stiletto into you.”

“I see you have learned a great deal out of your novels, Larry. Now,” continued John, “when mother was alive, she used to take an interest in the Italians that lived near us. She was just as poor as they

were, but she knew how to be neat and clean, and make things comfortable. She and the Italians were great friends. She helped them all she could. 'They're Christians like us,' she was always saying, 'and we must show some Christian love for them.' And she did. She would send a bunch of our red geraniums to help take the chill of death off a little child that lay in its coffin, or she'd send some other neighborly thing within her reach. And whenever there was a marriage or a christening, the Italians would always ask her to be present, and send in some sweetmeats for us children, or a bottle of wine. They were not a bad lot. And I think that if we really mean to profit by the lessons of the catechism, we ought to put them in practise. To go and talk about love for one's neighbor, and then go to chase one's neighbor until his neck

is nearly broken, is not a way of living honest and Christian-like."

"Preach on, preach ever," said Larry, yawning.

John's cheeks reddened.

"You ought to have more respect for John," said Ned. "Preaching or no preaching, he has kept a comfortable roof over our heads."

Larry only grinned. He loved John, but he did not like to show it.

Ned went to bed with a heavy heart. He did not fall asleep as usual. He thought about Beppo's misfortune, until his brain seemed to be nothing but confusion. And then Giuseppe's question about the apples worried him. What would Father Raymond say?

Ned had a miserable time, but at last he fell asleep.

John was not hard on the boys. He allowed them as much money as he could for themselves, so Ned and

Larry had, unless the times were unusually hard, a little hoard of their own. Larry never had his long ; but Ned added something every week to his little sum, which he kept tied in an old stocking under the bed. He had saved nearly six dollars. He had made many plans about this money. He thought of buying John a pair of heavy winter boots ; of getting a little stand and beginning the cigar business, in connection with a chair and a box for blacking boots ; of having a cutaway coat for Sunday, like those worn by some of the more aristocratic boys in the block ; and of playing an accordion.

This last thought had a sweetness all its own. Ned had often imagined himself in the act of pushing and dragging "Sweet Violets" from the instrument he loved. He felt, however, that he must give up even this beautiful dream. On the next

morning he went over to see Tom Keefe.

Tom was getting ready to go to work. But before starting he had to wash the faces of his three little brothers and help his mother to clear away the breakfast things. Tom lived with his father and mother on the third floor of a house in the block, not quite so crowded as the one in which Ned lived. His parents had three rooms, and they kept the place as snug and comfortable as they could.

It was impossible to avoid hearing the bad language of the evil people who lived in the house and in the neighborhood ; and it was no uncommon thing to meet a drunkard reeling up-stairs. But Tom's father and mother did the best they could to keep their children pure. They sent the younger ones to the Brothers' school, and made the eldest—Tom—

go regularly to Father Raymond's class. Every night after supper, all the family said the Rosary, and on Sunday nights, Tom, who had a good voice, sang a hymn, assisted by the whole family. Tom's father liked to have his family around him on Sunday nights. Sometimes the Smythes dropped in, and a concert was the order of the night. Tom's father and mother believed that the best way to keep him and his brothers out of the streets was to make their home cheerful.

Tom's mother was tying up a package of luncheon for him, when Ned entered and said, "Good-morning."

Ned waited until the luncheon was ready and started out with Tom. Tom was an errand-boy in an office, down-town.

"I came to ask you to go over to the Testas' with me."

Tom shook his head.

“Not at all—I don’t want to go near them. They will not want to see us.”

Ned pulled six silver dollars from his pocket.

“I am going to ask Beppo to buy a new violin with these.”

Tom started in amazement.

“But how about the accordion?”

“I’ll have to do without it, that’s all. Will you come to the Testas’ with me?”

“All right!” said Tom.

They found Beppo and Nina seated on the floor, trying to put the violin together. Nina had been crying, Beppo was still crying.

The visitors stood timidly on the threshold. Nina saw them, but her eyes flashed, and she turned her back to them. Filippo had slightly raised himself on his pillow. He watched the efforts of the children, and shook his head mournfully.

“No more music from that violin !” he said.

Ned walked up to the two and laid his six silver dollars on the floor, near the violin. Beppo started from his knees.

“What for ?” he asked.

“To buy another fiddle—that’s all,” answered Ned shamefacedly.

“Impossible !” said Filippo, from the bed ; “one could never buy a violin like that with all the money one could earn. It was a treasure.”

Ned sighed.

“Well,” he said, “I can’t do any more than offer you all I have.”

Nina pushed the money away from her.

“I would not take it, Beppo. I would starve first. These boys hate us !”

Ned took up his money.

“I see it is no use,” he said. “I

suppose I may as well buy an accordion, after all."

Beppo raised his head.

"Nina is wrong; I can see that you do not hate us. But it needs much money—ah, so much money!—to buy a good violin." As Beppo said this he seemed to sink into utter despair.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Tom.

"Don't give up so easily. Never say die. Why can't you hire a fiddle. Old Altieri in the cellar has two. Give him fifty cents a week, or less, and he'll lend you one."

Beppo and Nina looked at each other in sudden hope.

"He speaks well," said Nina, looking favorably on Tom. "I did not think he had so much sense."

"Ah, yes," answered Beppo, "but we have not the fifty cents. Ah, no, we have not the money."

"There it is," said Ned promptly,

thrusting his six dollars in Beppo's hand.

"He will pay you back," said Nina proudly. "As you do not really hate us, we will take your money ; but we will pay you back. See, I will mark it down."

Nina lit a match, let it burn for a few seconds, and wrote something in Italian on the white wall, which was used very often for this kind of book-keeping.

"Now let's go," said Ned, afraid that Filippo or Beppo might thank him. He did not expect thanks from Nina. She seemed inclined to look on the transaction as a strictly business one.

"We shall pay you back," said Nina proudly.

IV.

THE news of the misfortunes of Giuseppe and Beppo spread through the block. And when Tom told his "crowd" how sorry Ned and he had been made by the condition to which the Testas had been brought, the Italians were not molested. Father Raymond heard, too, of Ned's effort to repair the mischief he had done, and he spoke of it at the next catechism class. Beppo Testa hired a violin and began business again. Father Raymond began to feel that his teaching was bearing fruit. He did not want his boys to have only a parrot-like acquaintance with the Christian Doctrine. He wanted them to show that they were Christians in

their lives. It was vain, he thought, that the boys could tell him what the greatest of the commandments was, if the crop of broken heads and the complaints of injury still increased in the block.

Father Raymond had succeeded in getting all the boys of the block to come to his class, except Larry Smythe. Even the two Schwatz boys, ruddy, curly-headed little fellows, who spent all the money they could get at the theatre, came and were interested in Father Raymond's instructions and stories. The two Murphys and the three Malones were always in time, with clean faces and hands, which, at least, showed that an effort had been made to make them white.

The block was at peace, so far as the boys were concerned. Some of the grown-up people quarrelled among themselves, but the boys earned ad-

miration, even from the policeman of their district, by their careful conduct.

John Smythe was very uneasy. Larry had become unmanageable of late. He hurried through his work, and then pulled out a novel or a story-paper and busied himself in it. He had acquired a habit of reading in the street; a story-paper always stuck out of his pocket. He walked about as if in a dream. John could hardly get a word from him. When Ned asked whether he would have some bread one evening, he answered:

“Twenty scalps!”

He was thinking of some of the Indian fights he had been reading about. When John did not give him some household task to do after supper, he went out very silently and mysteriously.

Where he went John did not know. He tried to find out who his compan-

ions were. But Larry would not tell. Father Raymond came and talked to him, but he was sullen and quiet. All John's threats and Father Raymond's persuasions were not sufficient to get him to go to the catechism class.

Finally, John ordered Larry to stay home at night. He obeyed for a time, and then stole from the house when John's back was turned. John threatened him with all the housework. This had some effect, for Larry hated to wash dishes and to sweep and all the "girls' work," which he and his brothers were obliged to do, and for awhile, after John had uttered this horrible threat, Larry came home regularly and did his part of the work.

John disliked household work very much, too. He was the most industrious of the young men in the employment of Wilmer & Co., which

firm promised to advance him, as soon as he could educate himself sufficiently. But he had little time for improvement. When he got home at night he was very tired, and there were many things that had to be looked after. Many a time, when Ned or Larry was particularly hard to manage, John was tempted to give up the effort to keep the little family together. Other people told him that he was sacrificing too much for the sake of his brothers.

“You are losing your chances,” these people said to him; “your brothers will probably prove ungrateful.”

But John answered that he knew all this. He felt that it was his duty to take care of his brothers. He said to himself that he had no right to think about any reward, even of gratitude, from them. He knew that by letting them shift for themselves

he would improve his position. He could go and board in some quiet house, and have all his evenings for study. Other poor boys, no older than Ned and Larry, were out in the world. They were very hard to manage. But John had learned his catechism well. He knew the meaning of the question, "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

It was better that he should know that he was pleasing God, by giving up his own ease, than that he should choose to gain advancement by leaving his brothers unprotected from the evil around them.

Larry could not or would not understand this. He imagined John restrained him just because he did not want him and Ned to have any pleasure.

"John's too hard on us," he said to Ned. "He doesn't care for the

theatre, and that's why he doesn't like us to go. He likes to read old, dry school-books, and he wants us to like 'em, too. He's awfully dry. I say, Ned, Ted Malone has a big pile of story-papers and novels hid away somewhere. He lent me some. They're boss, I tell *you*."

"What have you been reading?" Ned asked.

"Oh, I have just finished 'The Bloody Avenger; or, Twelve on the Track of Death,' and I've another in my pocket, 'The Boy Gambler; or, The Scalp-Hunter's Love.' Look at this picture," Larry said, opening a worn and ragged paper and showing a coarse cut of a small boy flourishing a revolver in each hand and holding a dagger in his teeth, while two Indians lay dead near him, and he was kicking at a Chinese, whose hands were filled with playing cards.

"It's boss!" cried Larry. "Ted

Malone says that you can buy revolvers like that dirt cheap, and Henry Schwatz showed us a rifle his father had in the war. If you want to get scalps——”

“Father Raymond says that we ought not to read these things,” answered Ned; “he says they hurt boys’ minds.”

“What does he know?” exclaimed Larry. “They never hurt my mind. Why, Henry Schwatz has one hundred and ten, and he can tell you all about trappers in the West, and how many scalps a fellow could bring down in a week if——”

Larry turned suddenly. John had entered from the other room.

“Give me that paper!”

Larry stuffed it into his pocket.

John took hold of his arm.

“Give me that paper!”

Larry threw the paper at him.

“There —take it! It isn’t mine.

It's Ted Malone's. You're a mean curmudgeon to hurt a fellow's arm. Why don't you tackle a boy of your size ?”

John walked over to the stove and thrust the paper into the fire.

Larry yelled and shook his fist at John.

“ I'll make you pay for this !” cried Larry ; “ you ought to be ashamed of yourself to burn a fellow's paper that way. Approach me again,” he continued, suddenly borrowing the language of some of his favorite authors, “ and I'll brain you as you stand, perjured villain !”

Larry had not the least idea of what “ perjured villain” meant. But he flung the phrase at his brother with all his might. In spite of his feeling of disgust, that Larry should behave so badly, John had to laugh at this grandiloquence. The laugh hurt Larry worse than hard words,

particularly as Ned joined in it. Larry began to cry.

“You don’t want us to have any fun at all. I’ll run away, John, if you don’t look out.”

“No, you will not,” said John ; “you’ll just step into the other room.”

Larry ran towards the street door. John caught him, pushed him into the room, and locked the door.

“You’ll stay there,” he said firmly, “until you promise to go to Father Raymond’s catechism class.”

Ned generally stood by John in his struggles with Larry ; but in this case he thought that John ought not to have burned Teddy Malone’s paper.

“Can’t Larry have any supper?”

“No, he can’t,” said John.

“Well, I think it is rather hard on a fellow. What is the use of learning to read, if we can’t read what we like,” grumbled Ned.

“Look here,” answered John, helping his brother to several fried sausages ; “if you liked to eat rat poison do you think I’d let you do it ? That kind of reading is no better than rat poison. See what it has done for Larry. It has made him disobedient, and careless, and lazy, and idle. He does not seem to have reverence for God or man. Last Sunday he was late for Mass, because he spent his time in reading one of his trashy stories. Now, do you think that because a boy learns to eat, he ought to be let poison himself ? *I don’t.*”

Ned made no answer. He finished his supper in silence.

Larry sang in a loud voice for some time, to show his indifference to John’s punishment. After awhile John finished his part of the household work and buried himself in his books. Ned finished his work and

went to the catechism class. He found that Ted Malone and Henry Schwatz were not there. Their brothers could give no account of them. Father Raymond was worried by their absence. The day of the First Communion was quite near.

“I am afraid bad reading is injuring these boys,” Father Raymond said to Tom Keefe; “I hope you have given it up.”

“I don’t care for story-papers at all now,” answered Tom. “Father reads that book you gave us, ‘Fabiola,’ every night, and we don’t have time to read anything else. I say, Father, if somebody would read stories to us fellows sometimes, we would not care so much for story-papers.”

Father Raymond said in his heart that he wished parents would read good books to their children. It would save much sin and sorrow.

When Ned got home, he found John asleep over his arithmetic. He was sleepy himself, and he asked John for the key of the bedroom.

John awoke with a start.

“Oh, it’s you, Ned,” he said; “I thought it was Larry.”

“Larry’s locked in.”

“Yes, I remember. Good-night. I want to finish all these examples in interest before I go to bed.”

“Good-night, John.”

Ned unlocked the door of the bedroom and entered.

“Larry,” he said softly.

No answer.

Ned struck a match. It flared up, and he saw that the bed was empty. He looked under the bed, lighting another match. Larry was not there, hiding, as he had done before, in order to alarm his brothers. In surprise, Ned lit the candle. No Larry. The window was wide open.

“He has gone,” Ned said. “Oh, dear, what will John say?”

His eye caught sight of a bit of folded paper on the table. He opened it. It was a scrawl done by Larry with a red lead-pencil. It ran:

“BROTHERS,

“i rite to you in krimson ink which is the color of blud, it means bisness, it means that i am on the war-path, you have driven me fourth by your persecutions of a noble mind, that hungers to scour the vast perarie planes and cut the scalps from Injin murderers of our household gods. Fairwell. Goodbye. i go with a band of trusty friends to make a career in the wild west. If the Murphys say i gave them that penknife with the three blades, you take it from them, i only lent it to them. Dont have any fooling, just take it from them—fairwell till death do us part.

“L. SMYTHE,

“TRAPPER.”

Ned ran out into the other room with this note. John read it, and turning it over, saw a few more lines :

“i go with T. Malone and H. Schwatz. We have trusty revolvers. Do not follow us. Persoot will be vane. Again adoo !”

“ Well, this *is* nice ! I told you what bad reading would lead to. We may be thankful if these miserable boys haven't stolen anything.”

“ But, John, what shall we do ?”

“ Let me think ; I might have known that Larry could easily get out on the fire-escape, and climb down ; but I did not think he was bad enough to do it. Go over to the Schwatzes' and the Malones' and find out where the boys are.”

Ned ran off at once.

Ted Malone and Henry Schwatz were missing. Ted had written with a red lead-pencil a few words on the back of a letter :

“I go with the Red-handed Avengers. Accept my blessing or my curse, as you will.”

Ted's father laughed at this.

“I'll bless him,” he said, “until he is black and blue.”

And he went to the police station, to put the police on the track of the missing boys. Henry Schwatz's mother was in tears. Henry had gone ; where, she did not know.

Ned was hurrying home, looking very pale and feeling very anxious, when he met Beppo Testa running along with his violin. Beppo had had a good day and he was whistling ; instead of running away from Ned, as he would have done some weeks ago, he stopped, smiling in a friendly way.

“I can pay you back soon,” he said. “I have made two dollars playing for some young people to dance.”

“Never mind,” answered Ned. “Nina’s talk about paying was all nonsense. I’ve lost Larry—that is, Larry has run away.”

“Run away?” echoed the Italian boy.

“Yes; and we don’t know where he has gone.”

Beppo looked concerned. Ned felt that it was pleasant to have sympathy just at that moment, and he felt, too, how little he deserved it.

“Well,” said Beppo slowly, “I think I can help you. Wait.”

He ran into his house and came out immediately with Giuseppe, having left his violin with Filippo and Nina.

Nina had heard him say, hurriedly, that Larry had run away.

“The American boys are all crazy,” was Nina’s satirical comment. Nina had a sharp tongue. It was her great fault.

Giuseppe seemed eager to help Ned.

“I saw your brother and Schwatz and Malone going down-town with some big bundles to-night. I told Beppo about it. They were in South Fifth Avenue.”

While they were talking, they were joined by old Altieri, who came up out of his cellar. Beppo explained the trouble to the old man, who could not speak any English.

Altieri asked several questions.

Beppo's face lighted up.

“Ah,” he said, “Signor Altieri has seen your brother at the New York side of the Jersey City Ferry.”

“At what time?” asked Ned.

Beppo repeated the question to Altieri.

“At nine o'clock,” answered Altieri.

“I must tell John at once.”

“Will you let us go with you?” asked Beppo, hesitatingly. “We would like to help you and the good John.”

Ned shook his head in consent.

In the mean time John had been asking questions. But nobody in the block had seen the boys. He began to be seriously alarmed. What if Larry, led away by his daily companionship with young — although imaginary — thieves and law-breakers, had followed their examples? What if he had fallen into the hands of the police? John, while he went from neighbor to neighbor, asking after the boys, prayed that this might not be.

He had returned to the house when Ned came in, followed by Giuseppe and Beppo.

Ned breathlessly told John that the boys had been seen. A few questions, answered by the boys, con-

vinced John that Larry had been near the Cortlandt Street Ferry.

“ We must go after them,” he said.
“ Come, Ned—at once !”

Giuseppe ran home to tell his people that he was going with the searching party. The delay seemed very long to John. At last they started. John could hardly restrain his impatience. They entered a horse-car, and Beppo, who knew the driver, asked him to go quickly. The man laughed, for just then a stout woman with a basket insisted on getting in. She took her time, and she had hardly gotten into her seat, when a large party coming out of a house, stopped the car. They said good-by to each other many times. Then several children had to be lifted in and half a dozen bundles. John thought the car would never move. He felt like getting out and pushing it with his shoulder.

At last the car started again. But every now and then somebody signalled it to stop.

“Let’s get out and walk,” John said.

“No,” said Beppo; “we cannot walk as fast as the car goes, in spite of the stops.”

After a time—many hours it seemed to John—the boys reached Cortlandt Street. They crossed the ferry to Jersey City. Everything that was usually rapid in motion seemed slow to-night. He thought that the ferry-boat would never leave the slip. And when it did glide out into the river, it seemed almost stationary. It was going rapidly, but John’s impatience outstripped it.

They reached Jersey City. It was dark; the Pennsylvania Railroad station glowed with light; but the city, except for an occasional glimmer, seemed to be in gloom.

It was arranged that Ned and Bep-po should go into the station to ask whether the boys had been seen by any of the railroad officials, while John and Giuseppe went into the city.

John applied to a policeman.

No ; he had seen no boys like the ones described. But then he had been on this beat only since half-past nine o'clock. Another policeman was asked, with no more effect. In a few minutes Ned and Beppo came back. They had heard nothing of the boys.

John began to believe that they were on the wrong track.

They stood opposite the station, near the hotel, in consultation. Bep-po did not join in it. He was thinking.

He had noticed an Italian fruit-seller on the corner as he came in. He proposed that John should ask him. John did.

Boys? He had seen many boys—many, many boys—he stretched out his hands to show how many boys he had seen—but not three boys of the kind described.

John turned away. But Giuseppe was not so easily baffled. He spoke to the man in Italian.

“*Altro!*” exclaimed the man. “I did not know you were Italian. I wish I had seen the boys for your sake. What do you want them for?”

“They have run away from home.”

“It is too bad. Tell me how they looked.”

Beppo described them again in Italian.

“One might have had a rifle over his shoulder,” he said, remembering that Henry Schwatz had probably carried his father’s rifle.

“*Ecco!*” exclaimed the man; “I have seen the boys!”

Beppo rapidly translated the answer to John.

“Where? Where? Tell me where?” cried John.

The fruit-seller looked at him suspiciously. He asked Beppo whether his telling anything about the boys would cause him to be brought into court. “For,” he said, “I could not afford to lose the time. I have no one to help me at the stand.”

“I promise you there will be no trouble.”

Then the Italian told them that the boys—three in number, one with a rifle—asked him the way to the woods. The boys had gone straight on. This had happened only an hour before. The Italian told them where a belt of woods was; he knew it well; he went there for chestnuts in the fall. He told them how to get there.

“It is rather cold for camping out,”

said Ned, shivering at the thought of such a thing. "I wouldn't like to try it."

John did not answer. In his eagerness talk seemed a waste of time.

* * * * *

Ted Malone, Henry Schwatz, and Larry had walked rapidly through the streets towards the belt of woods mentioned by the Italian. Schwatz had three blankets strapped to his back, a small revolver in his pocket, half a dollar, and his father's rifle on his shoulder. Ted Malone had a knife—a table-knife well sharpened—a loaf of bread tied up in a handkerchief, and two dollars. Larry had no weapon, but he had a thermometer, which the other boys looked on with much respect, four dollars, and a few odds and ends—broken buttons, a hand-glass, etc., to be used in trading with those Indians who

should be courageous enough to resist these mighty hunters.

They had tramped along some distance, when Larry, who felt quite rich, proposed to have something to eat. They entered a restaurant, and Larry paid for oysters and cigarettes, "like a little man," as the other boys said. A half-hour was used up in this way. After this they did not hurry; they felt in better spirits, and loitered, looking into all the windows.

A large grocery store brilliantly lighted attracted them.

"We shall need some provisions," said Henry Schwatz, looking through the large pane of plate glass. "We ought to buy some. This is a good place."

The store was empty apparently, but behind the counter, in a corner, the proprietor of it sat dozing over a newspaper. He had sent his clerk

off early and he was about to close the store for the night.

“There’s a lovely ham,” said Ted Malone. “I wish we had that. It wouldn’t be hard to carry, and we could broil part of it for breakfast, you know.”

Schwatz, who was of a prudent turn, counted his money, and remarked that when they killed a deer or two, they would have meat enough. Still, the ham had attractions for Ted Malone.

“Don’t you remember,” he said, as he pressed his nose against the glass, “how Red-headed Bob fooled the grocer out of half a cow in ‘The Belle of the Prairies’? Bob went in, you know, and while the grocer wasn’t looking, he hooked the beef and was off like a flash.”

“But that was stealing,” said Henry Schwatz.

“All’s fair in war, boys; now I

say why shouldn't we get that ham, just as Bob did the beef, hey?"

Ted tried to speak in a jolly way, but he was forced to avert his eyes from the others.

"We've got to live on the world, you know, and we may as well begin at once," he went on. "Don't be fools! Schwatz stole his father's rifle, and you, Larry, have a dollar in your pocket that belonged to John."

Larry reddened and hung his head.

"Let's toss up," continued Ted, taking a cent from his pocket. "Head, you hook the ham; tail, I do it."

"But it would be stealing," said Schwatz. "I'll not do it."

"Nobody asked you," said Ted Malone, with a sneer. "You haven't got heart enough for it. But Larry has, and I have. Who's afraid? There's nobody in the store."

The man behind the counter had heard the whispers of the boys. He

could not make out what they said, but he saw they were plotting some mischief. He leaned back until the two piles of starch boxes between which he sat hid him entirely from view.

Larry's good angel whispered to him. He hesitated between the angel's whisper and Ted's sneer. He had read many times of how the smart boy in the story-papers had outwitted storekeepers and appropriated their goods. He had laughed over their tricks, until he came to believe that stealing was not so bad after all. But his conscience awoke when the temptation was placed so boldly in his way.

Ted Malone threw up the cent, giving it an adroit twist.

"Head!"

Larry moved uneasily from the window.

"I tell you what," Ted said, hav-

ing taken another look at the inside of the shop, "why shouldn't you take a handful of the cash out of the drawer? It would come in mighty well while we're travelling. You bet!"

Larry turned away his head.

"It will be easy enough. Schwatz and I will stand here and give the signal if anybody comes. Now go in; be a man."

Ted Malone was twice as big as Larry. He was something of a bully, too, as the boys in the block well knew. He imitated as far as he could his favorite heroes, and knocked down any other boy who defied him.

"I can't!" said Larry. "It would be wrong; it would break John's heart."

"You're a coward!" cried Ted, shaking his fist in Larry's face. "Do you think I'm going to let you spoil everything? Go in, I say!"

Larry hesitated. He had great re-

spect for Ted Malone's superiority. He hated to have Ted think he was a coward ; but he remembered the words of the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal !"

"He's afraid !" sneered Ted Malone angrily. "You weren't afraid to take John's dollar."

"He said I might have it to buy a hat with," answered Larry, "and I'll buy one or give him back the money."

"You will, will you ?" exclaimed Ted, as his fist fell on Larry's head. He raised his hand again to give another blow, when suddenly he was knocked over, and Beppo, with flashing eyes, arose out of the darkness. His sharp eyes had seen the group of boys at the window. John and the others had turned down another street, but Beppo had kept on, in spite of their opposition to turning into a street which seemed so quiet.

Beppo had crept softly up to the boys and heard their dialogue. His heart beat very fast when he saw that Larry was about to yield. He was afraid that the boys might run away if they discovered him. He hoped that John and the others might come ; but they did not, so he was obliged to do what he could. It was very effective.

“ Beppo !” Larry exclaimed.

Ted Malone picked himself up and looked sullenly at Beppo.

“ I owe you one,” he said, “ and I’ll give it to you if you don’t join our band.”

Beppo’s eyes flashed.

“ I will not join a band of thieves.”

Ted shook his fist, but Beppo’s lesson had been severe enough to prevent him from doing anything more.

“ I am glad you came, Beppo,” Larry said. “ I am sorry I got into this. I’d go back if I thought John

would forgive me. I don't want to join a band of thieves either."

"John!" cried Beppo; "John! John! John!"

Ted Malone took to his heels.

John came running. Larry threw himself into his big brother's arms and began to cry.

"I'll never read another story-paper," he sobbed. And he kept his promise.

* * * * *

Ted Malone wandered about the country all night. In the morning, in trying to steal a ride on a passing train, he had his foot crushed so badly that it had to be cut off. He never speaks of that awful night of terror. He did not make his First Communion with the other boys, although Larry did.

Father Raymond says, with just pride, that there are no better be-

haved boys in New York than the boys in the block. He now teaches the "Catechism of Perseverance" to the larger boys, and so well have they learned the meaning of charity, that there is very seldom a fight among them. They are all growing prosperous, because they are all industrious and they all help one another. Often Beppo and Giuseppe come to John's house for a little fun.

John has been promoted, and though he still keeps house, Father Raymond gives him a lesson in arithmetic twice a week. He is happy, as he deserves to be, in the fact that his two "boys" are trying to do their duty.

W 147





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